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# THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY

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The Springfield Weekly Republican for April 16 last contained an editorial entitled Latin in Small High Schools which it is a pleasure to reproduce here in full. It is hoped that many a teacher of Latin in the High School of a small town will find aid from this editorial in the battle which such teachers are often obliged to fight in the interests of the Classics. For a long time past no small part of the labors of the Managing Editor of THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY has consisted in supplying ammunition to persons, sometimes, in small, isolated communities, sometimes in larger Colleges and Universities, which should enable them to keep their courage up and face the foe with resolution. Thrice welcome is every addition to this store of ammunition which comes, as does this editorial of the Massachusetts paper, from those who are not professionally interested in the Classics.

All signs point to a fresh crusade against Latin as a school subject. Greek was jettisoned long ago, and is now taught only to a handful of pupils, but it has been hoped that this throwing overboard of cargo might help the ship to weather the storm. But the success of the attack on Greek has apparently only encouraged the iconoclasts. A decidedly hostile tone is manifest in the recent report of the Massachusetts state board of education. No direct attack is indeed made on Latin as a school subject, but its place there is sharply challenged, and, as to the smaller schools in which the state claims authority by virtue of pecuniary help, the language of the report is distinctly menacing. Among the "more serious defects" noted is this: "All of the 48 state-aided high schools were offering instruction in both Latin and a modern language, although the classes in Latin were in many cases small. In the 21 state-aided high schools that had only two teachers last year, 12 offered Latin and French, one offered Latin and German, and eight were attempting to teach three languages—Latin, German and French".

The drift seems to be that Latin should go, but there are reasons for questioning that conclusion. The demand that small high schools should not try to teach more things than they can teach well is only reasonable, and something should be done to relieve such schools from the pressure in this direction which the elective principle and the multiplication of subjects have caused. The small high school has necessarily a small faculty—what two or three instructors can efficiently teach is limited. As a rule it can hardly be possible at such small cost to offer good instruction in English, Latin, and two modern languages, besides the other essential subjects. It may sometimes be possible, and in such a case, when a school is lucky enough to have a real linguist, sound economy demands much local freedom to take advantage of the opportunity. It is no harder for a linguist to teach both German and French than to give all his time to one, and the instruction will not be impaired.

Such accomplishments are of course rare in this underlanguaged country, and the small high school will be fortunate if it can really give good instruction in either French or German. But it is not at all impossible for the college-bred teacher of French or German to be a good Latinist, and with reasonably good preparation through four years of high school and four years of college, with perhaps some special instruction or residence abroad and a brief course of pedagogics one person of literary taste and linguistic aptitude ought to be able to give all the language instruction of which a small school has need. The feud between the classicists and the teachers of modern languages is wholly groundless; they ought to be warm allies even when the same teacher does not teach both. To combine Latin with a modern language is no more exacting than the familiar combination of Latin and Greek, and the teacher of Romance languages profits greatly by a sound classical training.

Thus to provide for the teaching of Latin is by no means out of the question, whichever teacher undertakes it, and quite aside from the merits of the classics, a battlefield too sanguinary to venture upon incidentally, it may be said that Latin has been and may still be a strong point of the small school. It is a major subject, with great tradition, a weighty prestige, and a well-established method. It requires few tools, and few books—hardly any subject can accomplish so much with the same resources. In the many cases where the head of a small school has been a thorough scholar, with enthusiasm, ideals and a gift for vigorous teaching, the results achieved have been at times extraordinary; no small school with scanty funds could hope to do so much with the subjects which cannot be taught well without an elaborate equipment. The small high school which throws Latin overboard is throwing away almost its only chance to compete with the large and lavishly supported schools of the cities. With a classical and mathematical basis a school with two or three really able teachers can give within narrow limits a really admirable education.

To say that this ideal is often reached would be extreme, and it may freely be admitted that the teaching of Latin often falls very far short of the ideal. Yet these defects are in the main due to disparagement and lack of support. Latin has been retained with a vague respect for tradition, but it has been hampered in many ways. The college requirements have not permitted the Latin teacher a free hand; his aim has not been so much to teach Latin as to get his pupils quickly into Caesar. The board of education rightly calls for some relaxation of college demands in other matters—it might profitably have suggested that in respect to Latin colleges should require only such a working knowledge of the language as the time allowed in the high school ought to yield. With the revival of "oral Latin" which has long been decadent and the free use of easy Latin for reading in the early stages, it should be possible to bring the pupils on much faster, and have them better trained when they leave the high school, even if they have not read all

the prescribed books of Caesar and Virgil and the necessary orations of Cicero. Latin is so extremely valuable to the small school that it ought not to be let slip without a protest; on the contrary the demand should be for more freedom and strength in teaching it. A small town which can secure for its high school a genuine scholar who is also a vigorous and inspiring teacher of Latin is fortunate.

C. K.

### LATIN IN THE GRADES<sup>1</sup>

The experience of two years is too slight to furnish a basis for decided convictions but it is not too slight to offer suggestions as to the situation in the present, and plans for the future. There are now in our High School about thirty pupils who have, as a result of their work in the Grades, gained one semester or more in their Latin course. Perhaps this fact alone entitles the subject to consideration. Four points will be touched upon: first, the conditions found among pupils of the Seventh and Eighth Grades; second, the methods used; third, the advantages which the introduction of Latin in the Grades ought eventually to present; fourth, our greatest needs in case the plan is adopted.

In regard to the first point (this confession is made with all due humiliation), with each class which I have met I have spent weeks in getting the pupils tamed and trained so that they would listen to my voice and make an effort to follow directions. Even when there might be no intention of being disorderly (a potential subjunctive), they are exploding with a desire to conduct the recitation, to help teacher, to ask irrelevant questions waiting for no answer, and to volunteer information on the most disconnected subjects, and, when attempting a recitation, to 'go off half-cocked'. The effort to subdue them may be criticized on the ground that it curbs a most desirable spontaneity and breaks the spirit of the children. But there are times when something must be broken before effective teaching can begin.

Usually only the picked pupils have been allowed to take Latin and many of these have taken part in that gymnastic exercise known as skipping grades. This has in some cases left a serious hiatus in their knowledge; but, a more serious difficulty, it gives conceit, and a firm conviction that ability need not be reinforced by careful work and hard study. It is needless to say that I have heard many times, 'You are a High School teacher, and do not understand young pupils'. Just this fact alone ought to warrant my presence in the Grades. We hear a good deal of complaint about the material received in the High School. If every High School teacher would spend two years in the Grades, there might be as much complaint, possibly a great deal more; but it would result in an understanding which cannot come without experience.

<sup>1</sup>In connection with this article reference may be made to Professor Nutting's paper, Latin in the Seventh and Eighth Grades in California, THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 7:154-157; the paper by Mr. W. L. Carr, The Desirability of Latin in the Eighth Grade, THE CLASSICAL JOURNAL, 9:385-394; and to Professor Deutsch's paper, Latin Instruction in California Intermediate Schools, THE CLASSICAL WEEKLY 8:122-125.

One of the strongest arguments we hear in favor of Latin in the Grades is the statement that young children can memorize easily. Perhaps they can, but, in my experience, they do not. A list, a paradigm, a rule is never learned when I require it. I must teach it, and then teach it again. Often, to make the memorizing easier, I use some Loisetite trick intended for a middle-aged memory. If an exercise is to be written outside of class, the pupils are prompt and ready with their papers. In the matter of neatness and form these papers are almost beyond correction; but every noun ends in *a* and every verb ends in *o*. And the pupils, like Faust's student, are, with paper in hand, serenely satisfied. It is a material thing to touch and handle, and they like it. But they do not learn a list or rule, and they do not apply that rule, save with much help and coaxing. Yet this method, the written exercise prepared outside of class and forms learned with the teacher's help, is exactly wrong. Memory work can and should be done when the child is alone; sentences, certainly in the early days of the study, are best prepared under the direction and with the help of the teacher. This will also lessen the temptation to borrow and copy a friend's paper.

The children are very ready to respond to suggestions, but they are not consumed with an insatiable hunger for hard work. They are growing, they are sometimes lazy, often restless. They have little patience in making the mental effort to learn a fact or a form, and too little concentration to apply the fact or form even when learned. Correcting and re-correcting papers until no fault remains is an irksome task. The 'infinite capacity for taking pains', the beauty of perfection, except as connected with the material thing, is of course alien to their age, but at some time they ought to be introduced to it.

Restlessness and impatience which is natural to a normal child is exaggerated by the attempt to crowd too much into the day's program. This is to some extent the fault of the school, but the influence of the home (if that expression may still be used) too often adds to the complication. Try to do a quiet half hour's work with a group of weak pupils, and there is a chorus: I must go to orchestra practice—literary society—girls' club—boy scouts—campfire girls—dancing lesson—automobile ride—basketball; in short, a hundred interests, each good in itself, which fifteen years ago were not a part of a child's world. Ask a twelve-year old child to tell you his engagements for one week outside of school hours. Grown persons would find it difficult to keep the pace. Most of these engagements are connected directly or indirectly with the school life. Mr. Wenley once said, "You must not reproduce in your schools the restlessness of society". If College and High School students need isolation, serenity and quiet for their best mental development, even more is it needed by pupils in the Intermediate Schools.

Next a word in regard to methods. If the class can have five periods a week of sixty minutes, the average